

April 19, 2015 - Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 3:13-15. 17-19; 1 John 2:1-5; Luke 24:35-48
by Father Peter Asantebwana

Today's readings talk about recognition, that is recognizing the presence of Jesus Christ and who He really is. From the Acts of the Apostles we heard of Peter and John, after miraculously curing a man at the Temple who had been crippled from birth and who had been begging for money from people who passed by him, giving witness of the risen Lord. The miraculous cure caused a big challenge that gave Peter and John the opportunity to remind people of their failure to recognize who Jesus really is and that they had called for Him to be crucified and put to death. On the other hand the gospel account takes place immediately after the appearance of the risen Christ to disciples going to Emmaus. Here we see that the two to Emmaus were not the only ones who had difficulty in recognizing our risen Lord. Thomas certainly did and On Easter morning Mary Magdalene encountered our risen Lord and at first did not recognize Him. She thought He was the gardener. It seems that when He appeared to them they couldn't believe their eyes since in their minds He was dead.

To you and me on this Sunday we are presented with a challenge of whether or not we recognize the presence of Christ in our own lives, in our world. When do we recognize Him? Where do we recognize Him? Do we really want to recognize His nearness in the Eucharist? A challenge we have in our time is that many of us fail to recognize Jesus Christ who identifies Himself with the poor, with aliens and immigrants, with troublesome in-laws, and in "those other" people we don't particularly like. He told us that where two or three are gathered in His name He would be present. Can we learn to recognize Jesus in human brokenness? Many of us here have your own stories of experiencing the presence of God in your own personal lives. Each of us, as a matter of fact, has had our own encounters with our risen Lord. The curing of the crippled should open our eyes to His presence among us. When we encounter people with broken hearts, Jesus is there. When we try to offer comfort to someone with a broken spirit, Jesus is there. When we encounter someone who is experiencing loss, pain, and suffering, Jesus is there. Isn't that what Jesus was telling us when He taught us about the judgment we will receive at the last day? He will ask us if we recognized Him in human brokenness: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." [Matthew 25:35-36]

True, we live in times when men and women have sinned, and our own sins have obscured the face of Christ. At times He is not recognized in our world and at times even when He is recognized there are many who seek to get rid of Him. Nailing Him to the Cross is something that is still happening. But it is there that He reveals Himself. It is in suffering and broken humanity that He is present. It is there that He is to be revered. We are all walking our own roads through life. Can we -- will we -- like the disciples, recognize that Jesus is walking with us? Will we recognize Him in "the breaking of the bread"?